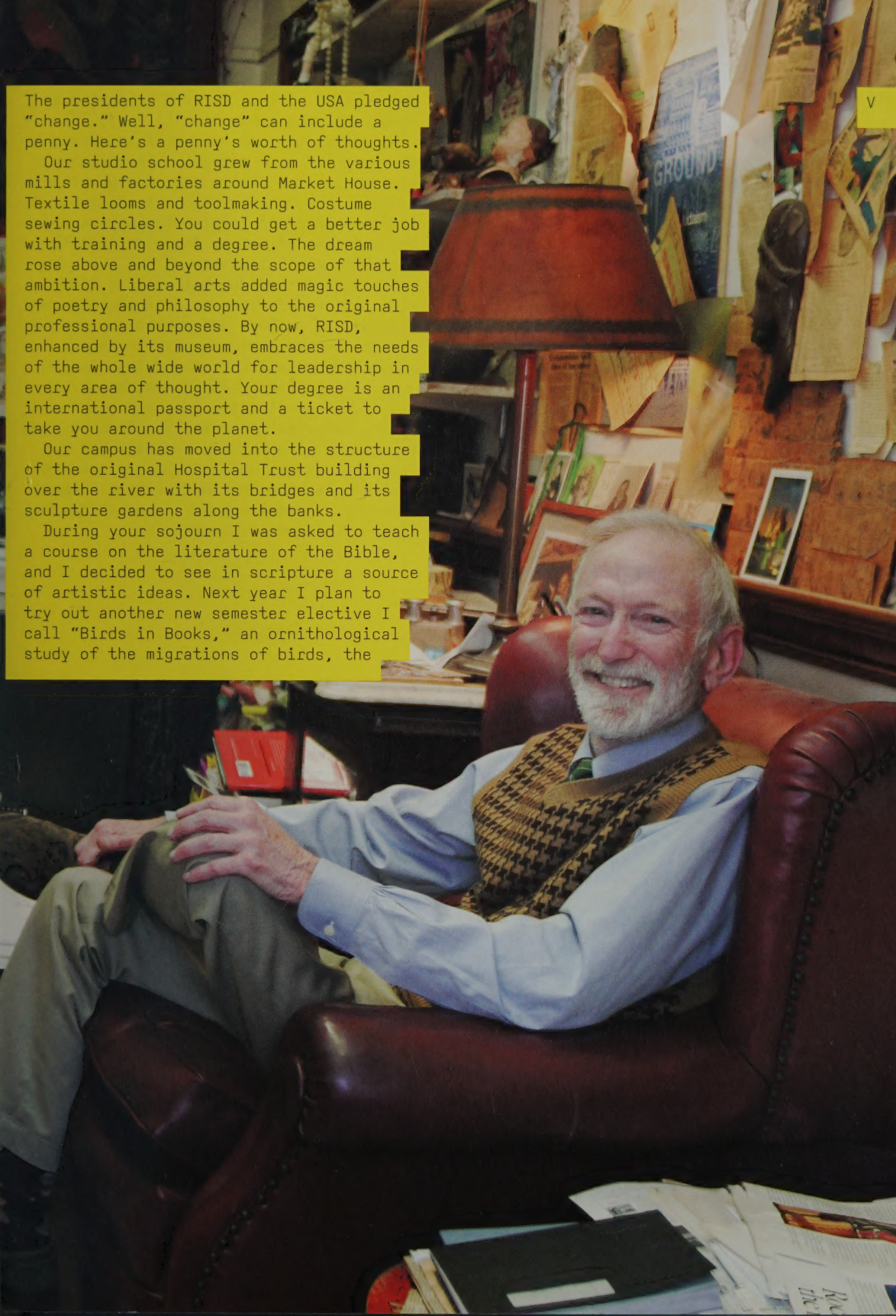
YBK

2010

Rhode Island School of Design.
2010 Yearbook.

What is RISD? We have tried to pin it down and describe it, but RISD will not be so easily classified. We defy definition, and the same applies here. What is the theme of this book? The theme is you. You are the ones who breathed the life into it. Thank you.

Foreword by Mike Fink



The presidents of RISD and the USA pledged "change." Well, "change" can include a penny. Here's a penny's worth of thoughts.

Our studio school grew from the various mills and factories around Market House. Textile looms and toolmaking. Costume sewing circles. You could get a better job with training and a degree. The dream rose above and beyond the scope of that ambition. Liberal arts added magic touches of poetry and philosophy to the original professional purposes. By now, RISD, enhanced by its museum, embraces the needs of the whole wide world for leadership in every area of thought. Your degree is an international passport and a ticket to take you around the planet.

Our campus has moved into the structure of the original Hospital Trust building over the river with its bridges and its sculpture gardens along the banks.

During your sojourn I was asked to teach a course on the literature of the Bible, and I decided to see in scripture a source of artistic ideas. Next year I plan to try out another new semester elective I call "Birds in Books," an ornithological study of the migrations of birds, the

architecture of their nests, the design of their plumage, and the endless possibilities of their influence upon our arts and our literature. To prepare, I spent a part of two Wintersessions in search of the Quetzal of Costa Rica and of Guatemala, the bird once thought to be the incarnation of God, and also in quest of the golden plover of Hawaii, the bird that interferes with the airplanes that bring tourists to the fiftieth state.

I would like to dedicate this yearbook to your own migration, to Rhode Island and its School of Design, and to your nests, present and future. And to the contribution of your dreams and your work to the campus and community. It is a wonderful second home for you from now on, the place where Roger Williams dreamed his dream of a well of inspiration and a refuge, a big dream in a small place. We share your dreams and play a small part in them. Throughout your four years, many among you have brought fresh books and movies to my office, to my attention, shown me your paintings and sculptures, swapped thoughts, ideas, adventures, opportunities, disappointments, and left some projects as souvenirs of our conversations. They stay with me and greatly enrich my life.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we may," said the Bard. He might have been referring to the destiny of artists and to their Muse. You may or may not find the job of your high hopes right away, but your calling brought you to this shoreline. There is a metaphorical meaning to everything that crosses your pathways, and your sojourn here imbues what you make, what you see, and whom you meet.

We live in a cluttered world, a troubled realm, and we look downward at our gadgets instead of upward to the blue horizon. We close our ears to the greeting of "Good Morning," to listen to sounds from a virtual world, not an actual world. I much prefer to say a courteous hello to the staff, in their uniforms, who pick up after us like parents and know us as they do, with good will and kindly concern for our welfare. I look forward to saying au revoir at your commencement.

We admire you and hope we have earned the honor of your affection and regard. We wish you the change you were promised and also the benefit of our traditions of craftsmanship and respect for nature and its miracles of beauty to guide, uplift and keep us all together.

In this last springtime of your RISD time, the waters rose up from the deep and flooded our cellars and soaked our sacred papers, mementos and memoirs in their cardboard cartons. But the deluge taught us our final lesson for commencement. Let it all go floating away and start again. Remember the water, another pathway to migrate like herring and eels and horseshoe crabs. James Thurber wrote the perfect blessing in "The Thirteen Clocks": Remember Laughter – you'll need it in the blessed isles of Ever After.

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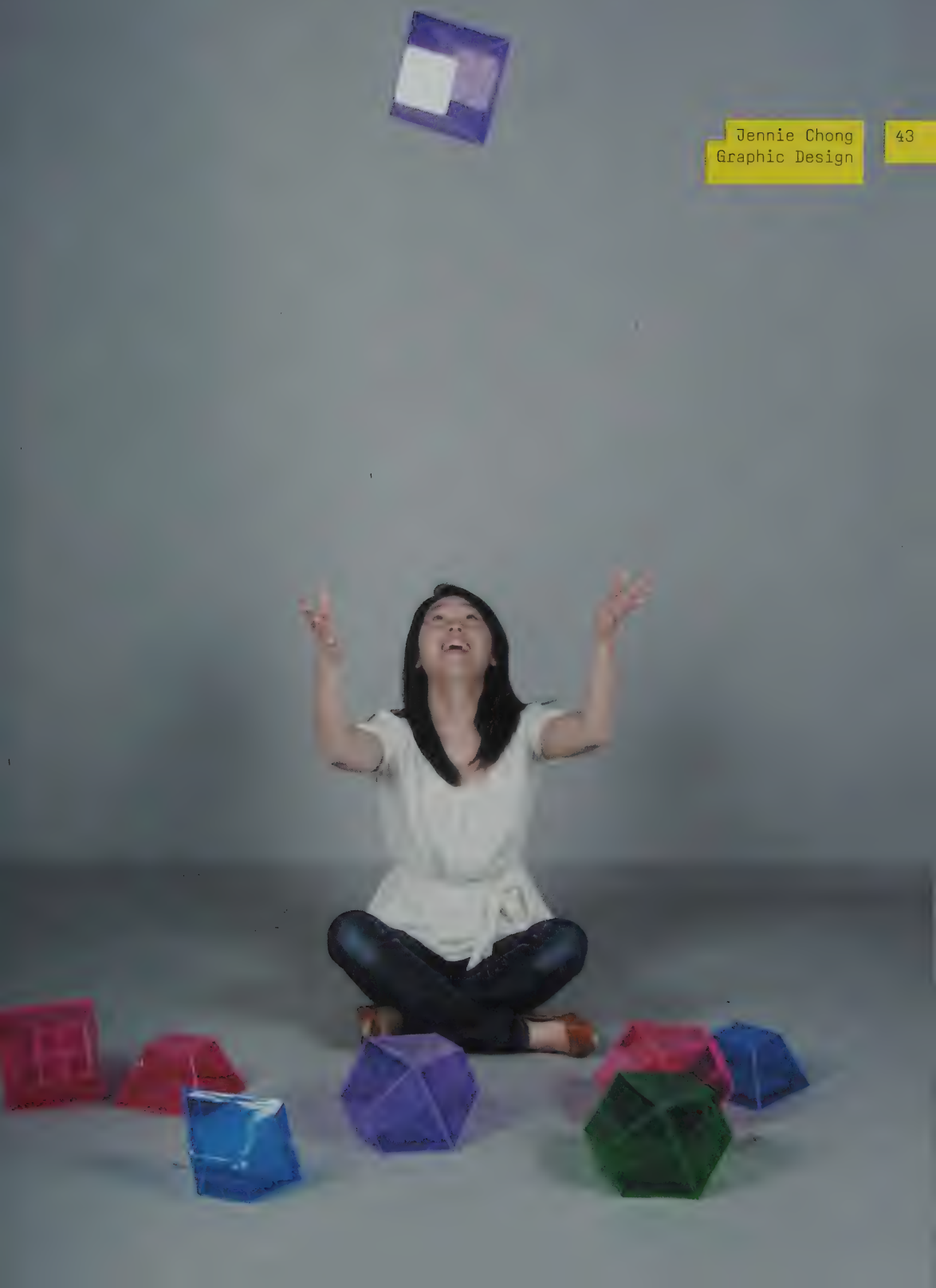

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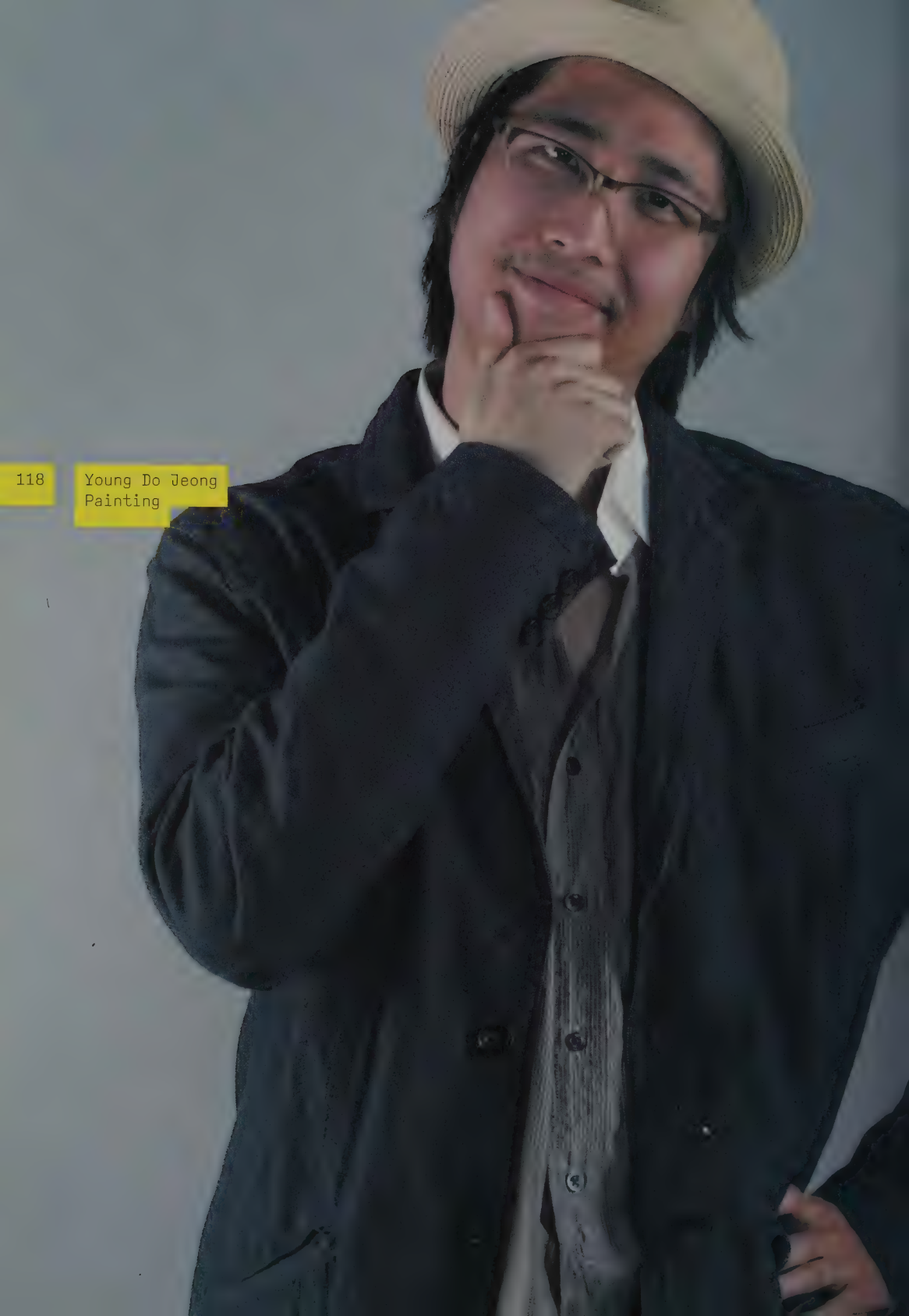

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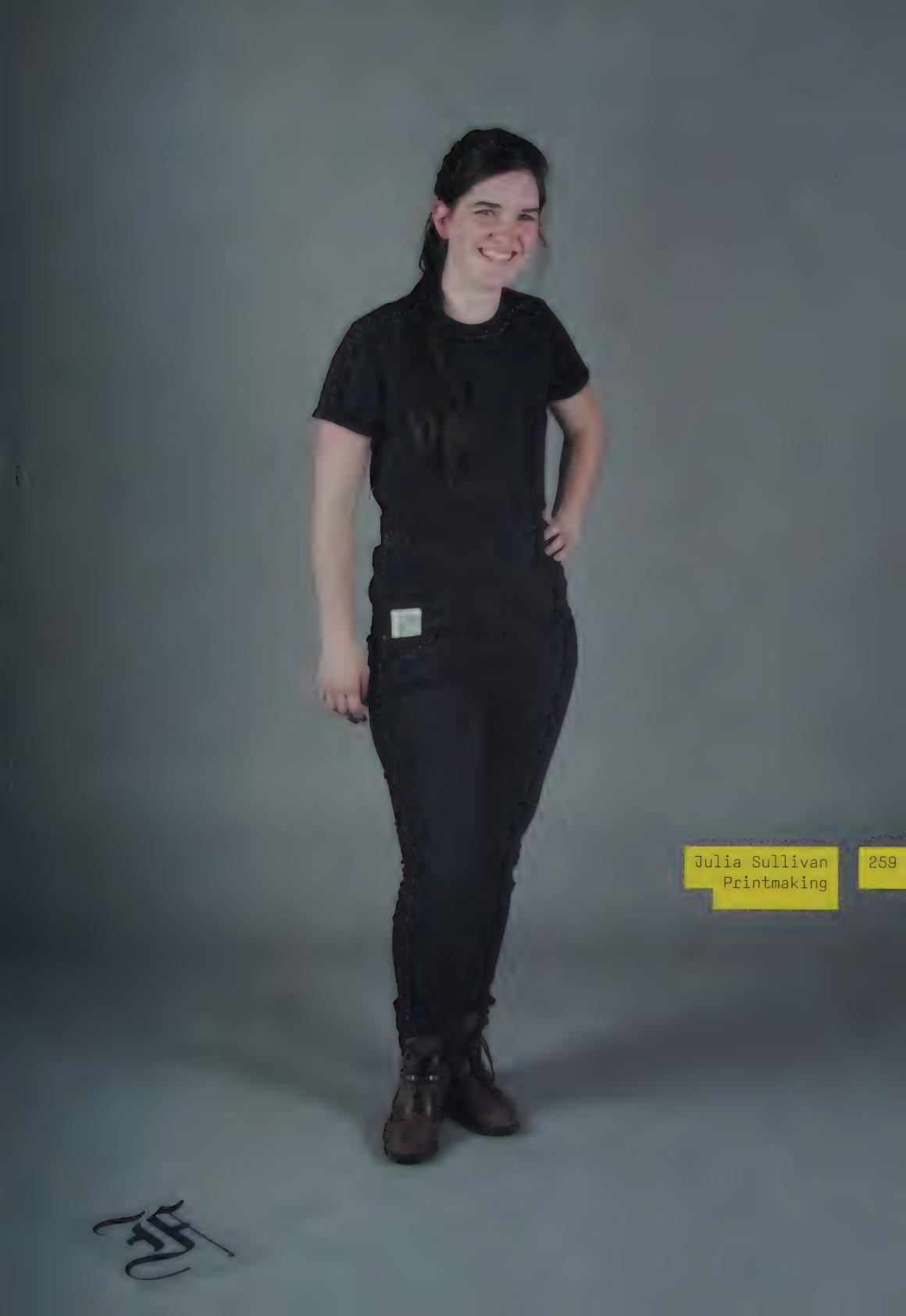

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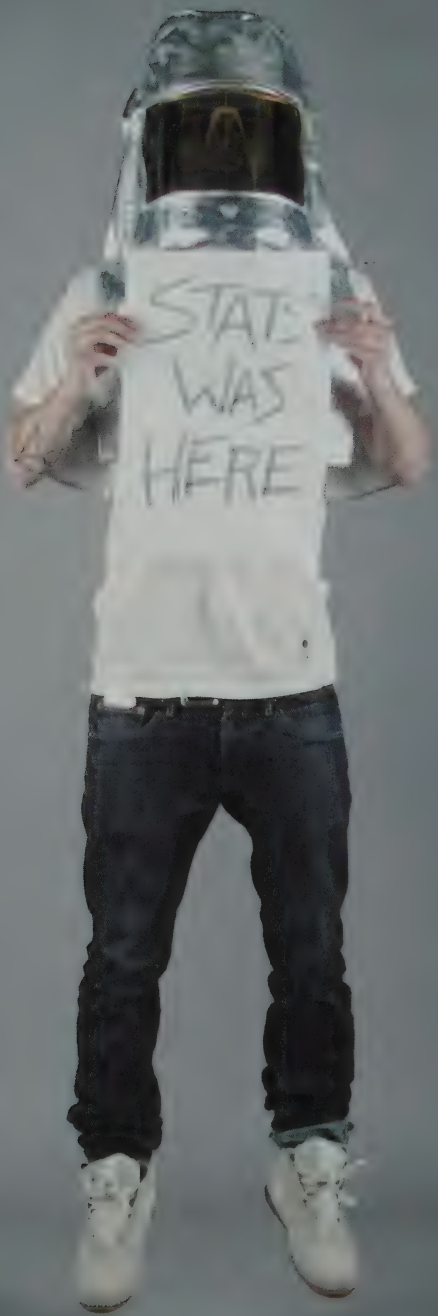

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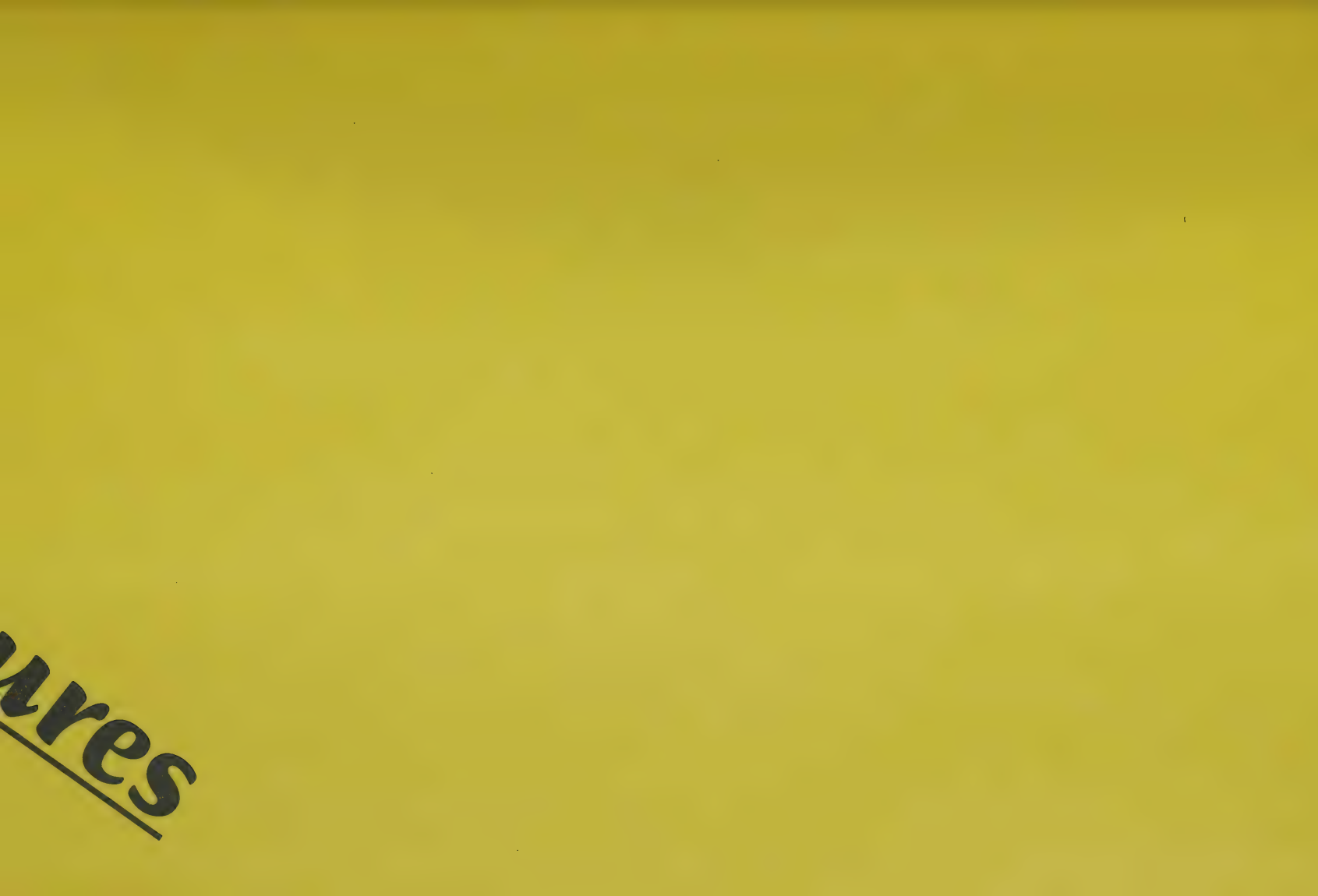
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